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FEB 26 1967

Personal Touch, Too

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Books Make Good Envoys On the Propaganda Front

By Roy Parker Jr., Washington Correspondent, The News and Observer

WASHINGTON — Even as editors of Ramparts Magazine were preparing their advertisement which blew the lid off the Central Intelligence Agency's secret support of non-governmental propaganda organizations, an unnoticed congressional subcommittee was hearing evidence that such efforts are largely futile.



Parker

The subcommittee, chaired by Congressman Dante Fascell, a Florida Democrat, has been painstakingly reviewing the overseas propaganda effort of the United States.

The burden of testimony has been that American propaganda efforts are largely a waste unless they are aimed directly at individuals right down to the village level and preferably in the lowest grades of the school system.

In contrast, the major portion of American propaganda money — either in the open budgets of the United States Information Agency or in the hidden conduits of the CIA — has gone to support efforts at high levels, among intellectuals, labor leaders, editors, or other groups in the higher echelons of power.

There was ample testimony before Fascell's Committee that the tools and techniques for real person-to-person propaganda are developed and available. But they have not received adequate attention

from the executive agencies, and Congress has been negligently in their support.

Books, it was brought out, are the most simple tool for a real person-to-person propaganda effort. Yet, in all the years since World War II, the United States has spent less on books for overseas than the cost of a guided missile ship. Just last year, Congress forbade one of the better book efforts, the Informational Media Guarantee (IMG) program which used local funds to subsidize import of books from American publishers.

Over its lifetime, IMG spent \$80 million, mostly in Asian and African countries.

Peter Newmann, a Massachusetts publisher, pointed out to the Fascell subcommittee that college textbooks supplied through IMG were probably the weapons of the single largest victory over communism which has been accomplished since World War II — the bloodbath in Indonesia which wiped out the incipient takeover of that country.

The total cost for the Indonesian book program of IMG was \$4.5 million.

Newmann and Prof. David McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, said that the technique of textbook-writing may well be the key to the entire worldwide battle for the supremacy of democratic ideals.

"You can predict a country's future by reading the textbooks used in the elementary grades," McClelland said. "China is an example; there textbooks are full of stories about people grabbing for power, hardly any about people cooperating. That is the stuff of revolution, and it will

come out eventually. When revolution starts in such a country, it is apt to be violent . . . and that is what we are seeing right now."

McClelland proposed that some agency of the government or private organization should use computer technology to "code the books used in other countries in order to spot danger signals."

What should textbooks contain which aim to motivate readers toward democratic ideals?

The possibilities of "achievement motivation" (AM) have already been used with striking success. In Indian villages, where illiterates were first scored on AM tests, incipient leaders were spotted and given encouragement, and "whole new leadership structures were developed where none existed before." Villagers who had turned their backs on demonstra-

tions of farm tools, siphoned off food aid for the black market, and ignored Peace Corps workers became full-fledged practitioners of democratic ideals and economic development techniques.

McClelland wanted more "Horatio Alger" stories. "The sort of stories that were the main stuff of American textbooks in 1890.

"We were full of that stuff two generations ago, but now we think it is a little corny," he said.

The ideas advanced at the Fascell hearing sounded rather grandiose, too hopeful, naive and complex at the same time. But they at least provided an interesting counterpoint to the roiling controversy which soon thereafter developed over the techniques of propaganda which it turned out had been used for the past 11 years.